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MONTHLY REVIEW

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Review of the Month:
The World Trade Organization? Stop World Take Over
by William K. Tabb 1

The Blair Kitsch Project
by Tariq Ali 13

The Need for a Radical Alternative:
Interview with István Mészáros
by Elias Kanellis 26

Us Versus Them: Laboring in the Academic Factory
by Michael Yates 40

Renato Constantino, 1919-1999
by Frederic Clairmont 50

Letter to Leonard Peltier
by Subcomandante Marcos 57

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Our Assistant Editor, Vicki Larson, was in Seattle for the demonstrations against the WTO. We are pleased, indeed proud, to present Vicki's account of these very important events.

I was in Seattle from Saturday, November 26, until Wednesday, December 1. Many organizations (including Public Citizen, Global Exchange, and the International Forum on Globalization) offered workshops and teach-ins to educate people about "free" trade and fair trade and to prepare demonstrators for the mass actions and protests on Tuesday, November 30. The Northwest Labor & Employment Law Office (LELO) helped ensure that people of color were represented at the big union rally the same day, and the Independent Media Center (IMC) mobilized journalists and activists to document and broadcast everything that was taking place. In the streets and at trainings given by the Direct Action Network (DAN), I joined thousands of people unwilling to give in to the invisible government of the WTO. We

(continued on inside back cover)

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The World Trade Organization? Stop World Take Over

by William K. Tabb

On November 30, 1999, when the World Trade Organization (WTO) opened its third round of ministerial meetings, the three thousand official delegates, two thousand journalists, and other registered observers were greatly outnumbered by the tens of thousands of protesters who came from all over the world to denounce the organization. Estimates of protester numbers ranged to forty thousand, according to the *Seattle Times*, which told its readers that the demonstrations were larger than those of 1970, when twenty to thirty thousand people (ten thousand according to the *Seattle Times*) shut down Interstate 5 to protest the Vietnam War. The parallel is appropriate. The still-growing movement in opposition to efforts of institutions such as the WTO to take over the management of the international economy may well be larger than any popular protest movement of the last twenty years or more.

William K. Tabb is professor of economics and political science at Queens College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is the author of *Restructuring Political Economy* (Routledge, 1999). This article is a revised version of a talk given at a teach-in on Free Trade, Neoliberalism and the WTO at Queens College on October 4, 1999.

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President Clinton, mindful that his vice president's chances of succeeding him rested in the hands of the Democratic Party's core constituencies, and that these constituencies were in the streets of Seattle, played a two-faced game. And so did the city's mayor, mindful that so much of his city supported the demonstrators and their concerns, despite daily newspaper and TV reports drumming away at how important "free" trade was to their prosperity. The president, having first tried to present the issue as a choice between free trade on capital's preferred terms or no trade at all (the alleged choice of the "Luddites"), instinctively moved to his (by now) threadbare "feel your pain" rhetoric. Environmental and labor rights issues were, rhetorically, to be piously supported, while in fact corporate freedom to pollute and exploit were to be given still greater scope.

The mayor of Seattle, under a similar guise of "concern," failed to explain why thousands of nonviolent protestors blocking intersections were shot at close range with injury-producing rubber bullets, pepper-sprayed, and teargassed. Nor could they explain why the actions of small numbers of "anarchists" were used to criminalize peaceful protests, and to justify arbitrary arrests of those who refused to yield their right to protest peacefully or who were simply, according to the police, in the "wrong place." The mayor proudly claimed to have supported free speech while effectively preventing it, just as the president claimed to stand for labor rights and the environment while supporting corporate greed's full agenda, as he has done consistently through his shameful career.

This attempt to manipulate, or "spin," the protest was a resounding failure. There can now be no misunderstanding of the strength, or the level of commitment and comprehension, of this emerging radical movement against corporate globalism. In anticipation of the Seattle meeting, some eight hundred grassroots organizations from over seventy-five countries called for resistance to the growing power of corporate greed. The WTO was an appropriate focus, because of its contribution to the concentration of wealth, increasing pov-

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erty, and an unsustainable pattern of production and consumption. The organizations charged that the WTO's rules and procedures are undemocratic, and serve to marginalize further the majority of the world's people, enmeshed in the instability and social degradation of the process of globalization without social control. In the wake of Seattle, this movement is stronger and more committed, and likely to be even larger and more effective, as well.

Since most citizens do not know what the WTO is, let alone how its actions affect their lives, groups—ranging from the United Church of Christ Network for Environmental and Economic Responsibility to Pax Romana in Thailand, from Green Action in Tel Aviv to Green Library in Latvia, from human rights groups in the Cameroons to the Indigenous People's Biodiversity Network in Peru, from Pax Christi in Florence to the United Students Against Sweatshops—have been involved in a coordinated effort to present a view of the WTO from below. They have been seeking to show what the WTO means to the lives of the world's working people, the environment, and the future of all who live on the planet. Seattle was a global lesson.

WTO officials maintain that "what we have here is a failure to communicate," that the passion in the street was based on ignorance, and illustrated the need for the WTO "to inform and educate" the general public about what it "really does." What do they really do? One official in the office of the Director General says, "If you think of the place as a bazaar where all the world's traders get together and haggle, you're not too far off." Pretty far, actually. Most of the world's people are not represented. Their labor is devalued by the transnational corporations (TNCs) who come to haggle and the major powers (pre-eminently the United States), which impose their preferences on the negotiations, or the haggling. Few developing countries have the same level of expertise into the intricacies of the legalisms; some are too poor even to have representatives at these meetings at all. And the developing countries are, in most cases, represented by an elite long since sold out to the center of global capitalism. The rich and

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powerful set the rules and the rules, not surprisingly, favor the rich and powerful. The haggling is an intra-elite affair but, as a result of popular militancy, a challenge is emerging.

Let me review where the WTO came from, how it works, and why protesters want revolutionary change from TNC rule of the world system. Let's start in Havana in 1948, where most of the world's leading trading nations met to agree to the formation of an International Trade Organization (ITO). The idea, and the actual text for the proposed organization, came from the United States. The ITO was to impose order on the world trading system, in order to avoid the kind of downward spiral which occurred in the 1930s—a collapse which had threatened the very existence of the capitalist system. Since U.S. corporations had come out of the war without capitalist rivals, they were confident they could prevail in competition with a prostrate Europe. That "free trade" favors the dominant economy was no new discovery, and elements of corporate and financial capital that stood most to benefit prevailed on the executive branch to put forward the ITO. But powerful nationalistic sentiment in the Congress feared loss of U.S. sovereignty to a world government, refused to be bound by an international governance agency which might in the future escape U.S. control, and declined to ratify the ITO treaty.

A preliminary agreement had been reached on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), intended as a temporary framework until the ITO came into being. With the U.S. refusal to join the ITO, GATT became a permanent fixture. It did not have enforcement powers, it was not formally even an organization. Yet for nearly fifty years, through a series of rounds, it was the forum through which negotiations took place to lower tariffs (taxes on imports which inhibit and, if they are high enough, prevent trade). In retrospect, some market fundamentalist economists and others are glad the ITO did not become functional because it was a creature of its time. In the postwar period, all nations agreed that full employment was a central goal for any international economic agreement, that workers' rights should be protected, that too much market power and domination by the big corporations

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should be discouraged through antitrust laws, and that weaker, newly emerging nations were to have preferential treatment to help them overcome the legacy of colonial domination and underdevelopment. All of these principles were part of the ITO framework.

None are part of the WTO, which came into being in 1995, over some congressional opposition (again from those who feared loss of sovereignty). At its first meeting in Singapore in 1996, after passionate discussion about labor rights and environmental protection, it was decided that these were not trade matters and should not be considered by the WTO, nor should special treatment for developing countries be established, but rather phased out to create "a level playing field for all." Certainly there was to be no provision to control transnational capital, as the developing nations desired in their call for a New International Economic Order at the UN in the 1970s, which the richer countries had resisted. For the WTO, deregulation (and greater freedom for transnational capital to do what it wants, where and when it wants) is the sole agenda.

In the preamble to the WTO, all sorts of lofty ideas and positive intentions are enumerated: that trade should contribute to a rise in living standards, ensure full employment, respect the environment. But there is nothing in its actual operation about any of these issues. In the WTO's trade policy review mechanism, there is nothing about evaluating the impact of its rules on workers, consumers, or sustainable development. The WTO's fundamental postulate is that trade and investment liberalization lead to more competition, greater market efficiency and so, necessarily, to a higher standard of living. If factors of production—labor, capital, and land (including environmental assets)—are priced properly, they will be used in the best possible ways courtesy of the Invisible Hand, or so the fable goes.

Other concerns—human rights, labor rights, and environmental concerns—are not the business of the WTO, an organization with the power to coerce national governments. Rather they are relegated to other special-purpose international organizations, with no power over either the TNCs or their

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governments. This division between the powerful institutions (the International Monetary Fund [IMF], World Bank, and WTO, which deal with the money), and the powerless organizations (which address the concerns that are important to the vast majority of the world's denizens), permits the agendas of giant corporations to be carried out while an endless blather of "feel your pain" rhetoric plays in the background.

The enforcement of a level playing field is supposed to be ensured through the WTO dispute resolution mechanism, and the enforcement of its judgments by the country that has successfully challenged violators. There is no acknowledgement that poor countries are at a disadvantage in such adversarial legal proceedings, and often do not dare challenge or enforce judgments against more powerful nations because of the leverage the rich have over the poor and less powerful. The process is not one in which the world community uses the collective strength of a democratic majority to enforce rules. Rather, an individualistic, purely formal concept of justice prevails, in which legal equals (who, in reality, are not equals) do one-on-one combat. This system, like the U.S. legal system, effectively eradicates any real challenge to the rich and powerful.

Furthermore, only countries have "standing," the right to participate in WTO proceedings. Indigenous peoples like the Ogone, who might challenge what Shell is doing to its lands (with the willing participation of the repressive Nigerian government), do not. Nor do the inhabitants of western New Guinea, since standing is only given to governments—like the Indonesian government, which refuses to respect the rights of those in western New Guinea, murders those who protest, and steals their resources, leaving their environment devastated. Nor is there standing in the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), some of which might advance the rights of indigenous peoples or factory workers who are repressed, jailed, and murdered by their governments in the interests of a "good" labor climate for multinationals. The WTO is a forum for trade rights of capital, on terms negotiated by the agencies of governments that represent the interests of capital. No other rights count.

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In the last of the GATT negotiations, the 1986 to 1994 Uruguay Round, U.S. service industries (such as Federal Express, American Express, and other financial and business service firms seeking to speed up their penetration of global markets) were successful in having the U.S. delegates insist on the forced opening of foreign markets to their products. The U.S. Department of Commerce established formal consultation committees; these have subcommittees for different sectors, whose representatives tell the government negotiators what they want out of the negotiations. The result was a precedent-setting General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The United States Council on International Business, with a membership of over three hundred U.S.-based TNCs, law firms, and business associations, put pressure on for a trade related intellectual property (TRIPs) agreement, since so much of TNC profits come from this area. They demanded and got trade related investment measures (TRIMs), which assured that other countries would not discriminate in favor of their home industries, making it harder for U.S. TNCs to penetrate their markets.

Other powerful lobbying groups put pressure on European negotiators (like the European Round Table, where their chief executives sit). The Transatlantic Business Dialogue, a forum where chief executives from Europe and the United States amicably attempt to work out their differences, helps the proceedings along. Absent from these backroom gatherings are small businesses, consumer groups, labor, and most of the world's governments. By the time the WTO meets to consider a topic, it has been well worked over at meetings from those held by the Trilateral Commission to the annual power gathering in Davos, Switzerland, where the great and not so good meet to develop positions which formal international organizations then adopt.

Governments have deferred to transnational capital's demand that no country be allowed to discriminate against its products and investments. It would like the right to sue directly any government which attempts to do so (that is part of what proposed multilateral agreements on investment [MAIs]

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are about), but as of now must act through the agency of its home government. Already such corporate rights are the basis of suits like the one against the state of Massachusetts, about a statute forbidding the government to purchase goods made by companies doing business in Burma. The law convinced such companies as Apple and Eastman Kodak to stop doing business with this repressive military-dominated state. Japanese and European firms preferred to sue Massachusetts for violating the WTO's non-discrimination laws with regard to government purchases. Under such rules, the effective local and national government boycotts against apartheid in racist South Africa would not have been allowed.

The U.S. Trade Representative is pushing (on behalf of the U.S.'s giant HMOs) for the right to compete with European national health systems to provide medical care, which would lead to the destruction of the current (and far superior) health care systems that exist in much of Europe. Other suits include one by a U.S. parcel and letter delivery service against European government "monopoly" postal services, which would have a similar impact on the right of democratically elected governments to make their own decisions about how their mail is delivered.

In another case, U.S. environmental laws were successfully challenged, forcing the United States to dilute protective measures. Under U.S. law, tuna caught with nets designed in a way that caused them to kill numerous dolphins in the process could not be sold in this country. But this was an "unfair trade practice." The WTO does not care how the tuna is caught, or if shrimp is caught in a way that kills giant sea turtles, or whether a product is made using child labor, and so cannot be a consideration for member governments.

Clinton's government has been quick to use the WTO to lower environmental and health standards around the world on behalf of the great corporations it serves. The United States challenged Japan's pesticide-residue testing requirements for agricultural imports. In 1998 and again in 1999, the WTO ruled that Japan's standards are higher than WTO standards for pesticide residues; hence, the Japanese must now accept

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higher levels of pesticide. Guatemala followed WHO/UNICEF guidelines in banning packaging that equated infant formula with healthy babies, but Gerber Corporation got the U.S. State Department to argue that this interfered with Gerber's intellectual property rights, and to threaten a challenge under WTO. Consequently, Guatemala now allows labeling in this area that goes against WHO/UNICEF guidelines. The WTO, on behalf of the Clinton government, tells Europeans they cannot keep out beef with artificial hormones because they cannot prove, to the WTO's satisfaction, that it is a health risk. In the past, it would have been producers who had to prove that their products were safe, and up to democratically accountable, elected representatives to decide. Under the WTO, it is governments that must offer conclusive proof. Thus transnationals get their way before WTO dispute settlement panels, which meet in secret and from which NGOs and other interested parties that are not nation-states are banned.

The rights of corporations now include what is called biopiracy: stealing genetic materials and traditional knowledge from indigenous communities and patenting them. Such intellectual theft has become increasingly prevalent. Yves St. Laurent, after importing a particular flower (*Cananga odorata* or, as it is known in the Philippines, where it is grown, ilang-ilang), set up its own plantations in Africa and secured a patent on the perfume derived from the native Filipino species. In another instance, India's neem tree is the source of thirty-five patents, mainly for the pesticide properties of the plant. Local users who have long known and benefitted from the tree's properties get nothing for the appropriation of this knowledge by European and U.S. firms.

Under the TRIPs agreement, all knowledge is declared property and someone must own it. There are now "inventors" of micro-organisms (who own both the micro-organisms and the rights pertaining to them). Plant-derived sweeteners long nurtured by Indian farmers and painkillers developed in China have been stolen by TNCs. We are also seeing major steps to patent seeds, reducing the biodiversity of agriculture.

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In the Philippines, MASIPAG (a farmer-led, community-managed effort on breeding and conservation of rice and vegetables) stands opposed to the notion that seeds are anonymous "genetic resources," free to transnational agribusiness corporations. They are trying to preserve farmers' rights to freely exchange seeds and share knowledge and resources. All over the world such Davids are standing up to TNC Goliaths. Thanks to such organizations as GRAIN (Genetic Resources Action International, in Barcelona, Spain), the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam, and other watchdog groups with Web sites, as well as the writings of public interest lawyers, we are informed about what free trade means for people around the world.

Not only is biodiversity, a common inheritance of humanity, in grave danger of being stolen, but efforts to patent seeds and increase monopoly rents charged to farmers will raise food prices and lower farm incomes. Monsanto, an adviser-participant in the Intellectual Property Committee during GATT and WTO negotiations, is attempting to link the sales of its seeds and pesticides by bundling products and forcing users to allow inspection of their fields, so that Monsanto can see that they are conforming to company demands. The firm is also among those fighting European efforts to keep out their genetically engineered agricultural products, using the WTO machinery.

But now many concerned and intelligent folk have come to protest the power of an unelected and undemocratic WTO to make decisions about what is and is not allowed, not just in food products, but also in basic matters of what is private or public. Such concerns have produced a broad opposition to the WTO's power and its *modus operandi* of putting corporate profits above all other considerations. The battle continues—this David and Goliath struggle between the WTO, the TNCs, and the most powerful governments in the world against the grassroots consumers and producers and those environmental and labor rights groups who help advance their demands. U.S. organized labor has taken notice, and (as shown in Seattle) started to move beyond narrow nationalist concerns toward notions of global solidarity. And now the big guys are worried; squeals of rage rise from the editorial page of *The Economist.*

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The grassroots campaigns against Nike, the giant athletic wear company, have been very effective. It helps that, when the press goes to investigate claims by labor rights activists, reporters are detained and sometimes jailed. Reporter Mark Clifford was jailed in Indonesia, and got a feel for what life is like for working people in TNCs' subcontractor plants. Clifford's story in *Business Week* was titled, "On the Inside, It's Hell" and detailed the wages and working conditions activists had struggled to publicize. Similar stories have run in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and elsewhere. Labor rights groups are turning the spotlight on Nike, the Gap, Disney, and other exploiters.

Legal challenges by public interest lawyers to Texaco's despoiling of the Oriente (a part of the Amazon basin in Ecuador) in U.S. courts have begun to get prominent coverage and worry other TNCs. Texaco, of course, says it met all Ecuadorian government regulations. But, according to environmental activists, Texaco has polluted and then abandoned a rainforest that has long sustained human life, leaving a looming medical disaster for the region's residents.

Through public relations campaigns and legal challenges, as well as large, visible demonstrations such as the one in Seattle, a protest movement is gaining momentum, challenging the dominance of transnational capital and the agencies that do its bidding. Free trade is increasingly seen as antithetical to fair exchange, basic human rights, good working conditions, adequate levels of compensation, environmental protection, and the equitable sharing of the common inheritance of humanity.

The WTO believes it faces a public relations challenge. It surely does. But much more than that, it faces an informed grassroots movement whose numbers are growing. The more citizens find out about the values the WTO fosters and the policies it defends, the more the opposition will grow. One spokesperson for the WTO dismisses critics as doing more harm than good. "To say that the WTO is harmful is literally to say that the world would be better off without a multilateral set of rules on trade," he said. "It's manifest nonsense. Nobody could seriously defend that position." But of course those who

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opposed the WTO in the streets of Seattle and in other venues are not against rules governing the global economy. Indeed, they want rules—rules to control rapacious capital. It is not a choice of their rules or no rules. The movement is putting an alternative set of rules on the table.

What the popular movements object to, and the WTO understands this well, is that the rulers now make the rules, and that the rest of us are forced to obey them. The challenge is in fact to the entire framework of trade, which the WTO portrays as maximizing self-interest through economic exchange; it is, in fact, a trade regime which maximizes the interests of the giant corporations. It does so by eliminating state-imposed barriers that now, to a limited extent, restrain the TNCs. Stronger laws are needed in the interest of values endorsed by the vast majority of the world's citizens. Those who understand that these trade-liberalizing practices do damage to human dignity, social justice, and sustainable development must reject the WTO's claim that their rules are the best rules (let alone the only possible rules). They are not, and there were tens of thousands of Davids and Davidas in the streets of not only Seattle, but London, Paris, and many other places in demonstrations, in teach-ins, and other forms of movement-building resistance. Goliath, watch out: real people's power is powerfully stirring and the grassroots are in determined movement.

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The Blair Kitsch Project

by Tariq Ali

When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, it was not simply the Soviet Union or the "communist idea" or the efficacy of Marxist solutions that collapsed. Western European social democracy, too, was severely dented. In the face of a triumphalist capitalist storm that swept the world it, too, had to trim its sails. The fact that, barring Spain, social democratic parties or coalitions govern most of Western Europe today is of interest largely because of the collective experience it provides: these parties can no longer deliver effective policies that improve the conditions of the majority of electors whose votes have placed them in power. Capitalism, unchallenged from any quarter, no longer feels the need to protect its left flank by conceding reforms. Under these conditions, social democracy finds it difficult to protect the underprivileged. All it can offer its respective electorates is either fear (vote for us because it will be very much worse under the Right) or vacuous ideological formulae, whose principal function is to conceal the poverty of any real progressive ideas: "third way," "conflict-free

Tariq Ali is a writer and filmmaker. His latest novel, *The Book of Saladin*, was published by Verso. This essay appeared, in Italian, in *Il Manifesto*.

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politics," "beyond left and right." The net result is either an electoral shift towards far-right demagogy (of which Austria is the most recent European example) or an increasing alienation from politics and from the entire democratic process. In other words, an increasing Americanization of European politics. With popular culture so heavily Atlanticized, can politics be far behind?

Perhaps the European Union (EU) will fight back to preserve certain values in both the cultural and politico-economic spheres. There is a great deal of tension behind the scenes, but Washington is in a confident mood. It is determined to break the weak and watered-down alternatives offered by the Franco-German axis by promoting the English disease. For nowhere in Western Europe has a social democratic party capitulated so willingly and completely to the needs of a deregulated capitalism as in Britain.

This is not simply the result of 1989. The Labour Party under Tony Blair (or "New Labour," in their own debased coinage) is, in many ways, the most significant success of the Eighties counterrevolution. Margaret Thatcher crushed the trade unions, demoralized the Labour Party, and used the media to promote the message that no alternative was possible. Blair's Labour Party is the product of this defeat. Political differences have been reduced to which party has the better advertising company, and whether New Labour or Tories are more responsive to market research. It is hardly surprising that this process produces mediocre politicians and reduces politics itself to pure kitsch. A classic example of this was Tony Blair's recent response to his wife's pregnancy. "Producing a baby," he declared, "is much more important than winning a general election."

This is the reality that separates continental Europe from contemporary Britain. The workers movement and its political parties in Germany, France, and Italy have not (so far) been crushed by local equivalents of Reagan or Thatcher. Jospin's victory in France angered the Blair circle, both because the French leader appeared to believe in some form of social democracy, but also because his very presence rebutted the idea that only telegenic, fashion-conscious politicians could

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win elections. The notion that the politician was a product on offer to the consumer-electorate was certainly not the case in France.

Anglo-American Neoliberalism

After the turbulence of the Sixties and Seventies, the U.S. bourgeoisie, to use an old-fashioned word, was determined to roll back the political and social advances of the preceding decades. With a new Republican President established in the White House and a new, eager, reactionary Conservative Prime Minister in No. 10 Downing Street, the time had come for a widespread shift to the right, which would enable capital to brand itself on the remaining decades of this century. Forty years after the rise of a carefully constructed Keynesian model, which had governed class relations in North America and Western Europe, it was decided that the time had come to demolish the old edifice. It had served its purpose. Gradually, a new Anglo-American model emerged—neoliberalism.

This was a vision of global capitalist supremacy, determined to let nothing obstruct the flow of profits. This new turn was symbolized by two Western politicians: Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, neither of whom were taken very seriously when they first came to power. The new economic regime promoted by Reagan and Thatcher had a tough political agenda. This was defined by the dismantling of welfare rights, the disabling of trades unions via legislation and repression (the miners in Britain, the air-traffic controllers in the United States), the deployment of military force abroad, and the redistribution of income away from the poorest to the most prosperous layers in society. 20.2 million households, earning under ten thousand dollars, lost an average of four hundred dollars each in benefit cuts, while 1.4 million wealthy families, earning an average of more than eighty thousand dollars, received an average of 8400 dollars in tax cuts.

During Reagan's first term in office, low-income families lost twenty-three billion dollars in revenue and Federal benefits, while high-income families gained over thirty-five billion dollars. This explained the massive endorsement of Reagan in the prosperous suburbs and the sunbelt. In Britain, too, individual greed was encouraged by the lowering of taxes and the sale of

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council houses and other state assets. "There is no such thing as society," proclaimed Margaret Thatcher as she followed suit with the promotion of a get-rich-quick culture that catered to the cupidity and narcissism of the individual, thus consciously creating a social environment in which the needs of the underprivileged could be safely ignored. Financial deregulation stimulated the formation of a class of *nouveau* entrepreneurs, who thought little of safety regulations or trade-union rights for their employees.

A hallucinatory euphoria, aided and abetted by a sycophantic news establishment, helped to cement the new consensus. A full-scale ideological assault was mounted on the old postwar settlement. Overnight, Keynesianism became a dirty word. A new social, political, economic, and cultural consensus was born. It was ugly. It was brutal. It appeared to work. It had to be made hegemonic.

Those in the TV networks, who resisted being "one of us" were unceremoniously removed. With the help of Rupert Murdoch and others, a culture of conformity began to take shape. The situation was summed up brilliantly by an internationalist banner carried by striking South Korean workers during a general strike in the late Eighties, outside a Japanese transnational with big business interests in Britain. It read: "You Can't Defeat Us. We're Not English!" In Britain, a significant number of Blair's *apparatchiks* are former contributors to *Marxism Today*, once the theoretical journal of the British Communist Party (now defunct). Its editors were heavily influenced by the Italian Communist Party (PCI). *Marxism Today* made its own historic compromise. It decided to dump virtually every socialist principle and accommodated shamelessly to free-market ideology, consumerism of the basest sort, "postmodern" life-styles, and the "end of ideology." While the senior statesmen of *Marxism Today*, Eric Hobsbawm and Stuart Hall, preserved a certain distance from all this, they were unable to stop the slide.

Blair: an English Clinton

Tony Blair's victory as leader of the Labour Party was not pre-ordained. It was the result of John Smith's untimely death.

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Ideologically, Smith was a staunch European social democrat, not unlike Jospin, but without a Trotskyist hinterland. Blair modeled himself as the English Clinton.

Bill Clinton, seared by the experience of Reaganism, shifted the U.S. Democrats to the Right, abandoning any pretense of a New Deal and, in the name of the New Democrats, won the Presidential election. Blair now sought to mimic this success. The scale of Labour's electoral victory in the May 1997 general election surprised its leaders. They had fought a banal campaign, strong on presentation, weak on politics. It stressed continuity with the old regime rather than any serious change. Blair's presidential demeanor smacked of Bonapartism. His image was used to reassure voters that he was not too different from the Tories who had governed Britain since 1979, and that he would be a friend of big business. It was publicly stated by Blair and his spin doctors that the trade unions would be kept at arm's length. It was also widely hinted that Blair and his group would like to detach the Labour Party from the trade unions altogether. A modern, democratic party had no time for old-fashioned conflicts. Ideally, Blair wanted a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats to lay the basis for a new Centre Party that could dominate politics for the next fifty years. At least that was the desire, but the electoral majority made any such wish a utopia.

At a lunch for big business at the Savoy Hotel in London on May 13, 1996, Peter Mandelson, a close ally of Blair, stated that he favored "healthy profits" for companies and was not unduly bothered by the fact that this would "inevitably lead to inequalities in incomes." This was an open pledge to the effect that Britain would always be safe for foreign investors. The domination of the British economy by transnationals is five times greater than the rest of Western Europe and three times that of the United States. After two years of Blair, the gap between executive salaries and the average wage is the largest in Europe. Blair's ideologues were so convinced that victory had only been won because they had ditched a traditional social-democratic program that they ignored the reality of Britain under the Conservatives. The Blair people did not want

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to believe that the electorate wanted to punish their predecessors for big crimes rather than misdemeanors, and that they really had voted for a change. The decline in education, in the health service, the sale of the railways, and water had never been popular. The sale of public housing to those living in it was a key plank in Thatcherite policies. New Labour had decided it was popular and promised to leave it unchanged.

But by early 1996, the mood had begun to shift. Individual greed was beginning to turn to anger as people realized that they had been cheated and nothing was being done to alleviate their suffering. New Labour enthusiasts do not like to be reminded that between 1990 and 1996, a million people lost their homes through repossession by the mortgage companies. 390,000 homes, once publicly owned, were seized by the companies. Another one million properties were estimated in the same year to be suffering from "negative equity:" the homeowners had paid too much for them in the first instance and could not get their money back.

Thatcher had decided to make Britain a nation of small businesses. This was the much vaunted "popular capitalism." By 1997, the year of Labour's victory, personal bankruptcies had "stabilized" at twenty-two thousand a year, and thirty thousand companies became insolvent between 1990 and 1997. The "flexible labor market" so beloved by Thatcher, Blair, and the transnationals had, in reality, made unemployment a mainstream experience. In December 1997, it was estimated that one in five men and one in eight women had suffered at least one extended spell of joblessness in their adult lives. It is this insecurity that modern capitalism, which lives for the short-term, values so greatly. Blair is the battering ram which capital wants to use to break down the remaining pockets of resistance in Europe. The EU should beware the English carrying gifts. For what they offer is the U.S. model, and this model is not the success that its supporters claim. The figures speak for themselves.

The U.S. Model

If one studies the actual performance of the U.S. economy, one sees that the model to which Blair aspires has been little

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short of disastrous. If we accept that productivity growth—output per hour—is the most useful single indicator to determine economic health and the key to increased wealth and a growth in wages, then the situation is bleak. Over the last twenty-five years, productivity has grown less than half of its average rate of increase during the entire previous century. It is a little over 1 percent a year, compared to 2.2 percent between 1890 and 1973. This means that the output available to distribute to workers—assuming that the distribution didn't change—grew half as fast as before.

On the level of wages, the picture is much worse. The distribution of income between rich and poor has deteriorated sharply. Since 1973, there has been a total stagnation of wages. Real wages have been flat for the last quarter of a century. Today they are at approximately the same level that they were in 1968. This shows that wages grew at an average annual rate of at least 2 percent (often faster) during every single decade between 1890 and 1970, with no exceptions. This includes the decade of depression—the 1930s.

Nothing has changed under Clinton. In 1998, the wages of the bottom 80 percent of the labor force were lower than they had been in 1989, and significantly lower than in 1979. Simultaneously, the United States has been the only major capitalist country where workers have actually had to increase the average number of years they work each year, and that number has grown above two thousand hours per year. This means that U.S. workers labor more each year than the workers of any other Western country. They work 10 to 20 percent more than Western European workers. Even the Japanese, usually top of the chart in terms of working hours, have sharply reduced this during the 1990s and are now working less on average than North Americans. Inequality, too, has increased, and continues to do so throughout the 1990s.

The ratio of executive pay to workers' wages was 42:1 in 1980; by 1990, it had doubled to 85:1 and by 1997, it had quadrupled to 326:1. In 1980, the richest 1 percent of the population owned 20.5 percent of the wealth. This rose to 31.9 percent in 1989 and had reached 40.1 percent in 1997. The value of

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stocks tripled in real terms between 1990 and 1998. This extraordinary leap benefited those who were already rich. The top 1 percent netted 42.5 percent and the richest 10 percent netted 85.8 percent, leaving the bottom 80 percent with peanuts. This is the famous trickle-down economics of neoliberal fantasists. When we are told the U.S. economy is working well, this is true, but only for the well-off. In the United States, 25 percent of all children live in poverty. This number is double that of any other advanced capitalist economy, except one—Britain. In terms of elderly poverty, the United States is 20 percent, but in this field, at least, it has been overtaken by its British followers; in England, 24 percent of old people now live in poverty.

Farewell to Redistribution

Under these conditions, the cold-blooded decision taken by New Labour's leaders and thinkers, to discard the very concepts of equality and social justice and turn their backs on redistributive policies, marks a sharp break with traditional social democracy. Harold Wilson, Richard Crossman, Antony Crosland, and Barbara Castle, not to mention Clement Attlee and Herbert Morrison, appear as "loony lefties" for insisting that the state had an important role to play in regulating capitalism.

The first three decisions made by New Labour were highly symbolic, designed to show the City of London that this was not an old-style Labour regime. They had made their peace with free-market values, and no reformist nonsense would be tolerated. It was decided to detach the Bank of England from government control and give it full authority to determine monetary policy.

A second determining act in office was to cut eleven pounds a week in welfare benefits to single mothers. The savings for the state were minimal. The aim was ideological: contempt for the "weaknesses" of the old welfare state and an assertion of "family values." Unlike Clinton, his British disciple is a genuine Christian enthusiast!

The third measure was to charge tuition fees to all university students. This was a proposal that had been rejected more

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than once by the preceding Conservative government on the grounds that it was unfair and would discriminate against students from poor families. New Labour apologists were quick to point out that students in real need would not be charged, but the overall effect has been to discourage working-class children from achieving a higher education. The culture of New Labour is, essentially, not simply to maintain the status quo but to defend it as an achievement of the free market and insist that there is no conflict between corporate interests and those of working people. Overnight people, like former Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Roy Hattersley, a right-wing social democrat at the best of times, began to sound very radical; all he was doing in his regular *Guardian* column was reiterating traditional Labour commitments to a moderate degree of social justice.

One of the last big measures of the preceding Conservative government had been to privatize the railways, despite the fact that only 15 percent of the population supported such a measure. At the 1993 Labour Party Conference, John Prescott, now Deputy Prime Minister and in charge of transport, told delegates: "Let me make it crystal clear that any privatisation of the railway system that does take place will, on the arrival of a Labour Government, be quickly and effectively dealt with ... and be returned to public ownership."

A year later, at the 1994 Labour Party Conference, Frank Dobson pledged on behalf of the leadership: "Let me give this pledge not just to this Conference but to the people of Britain. The next Labour Government will bring the railway system back into public ownership." By 1996, with Blair firmly in control, the crystal clearness had vanished completely. Instead, New Labour pledged to create "a modern integrated transport system, built in partnership between public and private finance." On July 23, 1999, *The Economist,* a staunchly pro-capitalist weekly, published an article headed, "The Rail Billionaires" and sub-headed: "The privatisation of British Rail has proved a disastrous failure. Without big changes, things are going to get worse." The magazine provided an example: "Indeed, until last year, some of Railtrack's suppliers decided,

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in effect, which parts of the track needed renewal. Naturally, they appeared concerned less with passenger safety than with their own profits. Because they are paid by the mile, they have understandably tended to choose sections that are easy to renew rather than those that involve the most work." In October 1999, there was a rail crash at Paddington Station, in which dozens of people lost their lives. John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, immediately went on television to say the crash had nothing to do with privatization. He looked shifty and uneasy as he was mouthing New Labour platitudes. In truth, the group of directors earning a fortune in dividends had decided that seven hundred million pounds was too much to invest in ATP, the safety system that would have prevented the Paddington crash. The public was outraged. Every opinion poll showed a large majority of citizens (varying between 65 and 85 percent) in favor of renationalizing the railways. New Labour, normally very keen on focus groups and other slightly bogus marketing techniques, was not prepared to listen to the people. In March 1998, a year and a half before the accident, John Prescott had stated: "The privatised railway is producing windfall profits for a few people as a result of the contracts awarded by the last Government. There is nothing I can do about that."

Nothing? Rarely has a senior Cabinet Minister admitted the impotence of his government so clearly. The fact is, of course, that with massive public support, the government could issue public bonds to raise the money to take the railways back from the billionaires. Such a move, however, would breach New Labour's contract with big business: we create the conditions for you to make the money. This approach is now being taken in state education and the National Health Service, where the Private Finance Initiative will *de facto* deliver hospitals to profit-making companies in return for private capital. Already a number of schools have been selected for sale to private education companies.

The one area in which New Labour found it difficult to renege on pledges made while in Opposition was devolution. It was the single issue which would have brought out all the simmering tensions and hatreds within the Labour Party. The referendums in Scotland and Wales were duly held, and the

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citizens of these two regions voted to set up their own Parliament (in Scotland) and Assembly (in Wales). The Scottish National Party (SNP) and Plaid Cymru provided the main opposition to New Labour, and both the nationalist parties were to the left of New Labour on issues of both domestic and foreign policy. In both elections, New Labour won, but by very small margins.

In Scotland, many former Labour voters deserted to the Nationalists. The pattern in Wales was the same. Neither of the two nationalist parties waged an anti-English campaign. Both stressed the importance of Europe and a progressive social policy. The presence of these two parties has partially solved the problem of a social-democratic opposition to the political economy of New Labour. No similar alternative exists in England. A change in the electoral system, to some form of proportional representation, might compel the fragmented forces of the Left in and outside Labour to pool their resources and mount an electoral challenge, but New Labour has retreated on this front as well.

The changes promised have either proved stillborn, as in the case of reforming the House of Lords, or have been delayed indefinitely. New Labour is preparing already for the next elections. Given the debilitated state of the Conservative Party, it is very likely that New Labour will be back in power, but with a reduced majority. Perhaps then an opposition from the Left might emerge, even in England.

Europe?

On Europe, the Blair government (until very recently) showed signs of real confusion, giving the impression of paralysis. After an extended display of brashness in pushing the British model for the rest of Europe, an uncharacteristic silence gripped the government in the last three months of 1998. Public worries were expressed by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was concerned that British productivity is 20 percent below that of tax-and-spend, muddle-through France, not to speak of Germany. Both Blair and Brown may have been told by a kindly civil servant that Britain

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has the lowest proportion of sixteen-to-eighteen-year-olds in full-time education of any EU country, one of the lowest levels of university entrance as a proportion of the age group, and ranks tenth in the EU in the educational standards of its workforce. Britain has the highest recorded crime rates of any EU country and the highest proportion of the population in prison, excepting Portugal.

The victory of the German left in the 1998 elections created near-panic in Downing Street. The crusade to bring Europe into step with Britain's low-productivity, low-education, low-tax, low-inflation economy has been stopped. A rearguard action has been mounted to sabotage any attempts at tax harmonization, since such a move might attract foreign companies directly to the continent. They would no longer need to pass Britain and collect their tax break.

The only time in recent months that Blair seemed happy in Europe was when he was signing an agreement with the Conservative Aznar government in Spain on a joint policy for flexible labor markets—a third way for the Spanish Right. Conveniently, Tony Giddens, the Director of the London School of Economics, was on hand for a bit of on-the-spot guidance for Aznar's party cadres. The Spanish paper, *El Mundo*, greeted the Blair-Aznar deal with a front-page banner headline: "Aznar declares war on French and German socialism."

New Labour's cherished British model could not survive without tax breaks for foreign investors, degraded public services, and a docile and cheap labor force. At most, 20 percent of the population has benefited from these conditions. The fear that lies behind New Labour's rejection of even the mild, continental variety of social democracy is not so much Murdoch, but this crucial 20 percent, which includes, of course, the entire membership of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). The resignation of Oskar Lafontaine from the German government was greeted with loud cheers in Downing Street. Perhaps the "British model" could be resurrected. The confusion could get worse as a referendum on the single currency gets closer. If nothing changes, the electorate might have reason to regret that Britain was ruled

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by Blair in the spirit of Thatcher, rather than someone in the tradition of John Smith and Scottish social democracy.

Foreign Policy

As far as foreign policy is concerned, all the pretensions of New Labour, as well as Robin Cook's pledge of an ethical foreign policy, have disappeared. The Kosovo war was simply a repeat of Britain playing second fiddle to the United States—and with far less dignity than even their Conservative predecessors. Tony Blair prancing about in his shirt-sleeves, while his spin doctor, Alastair Campbell, organized the Kosovans to chant "Tony, Tony, Tony," was one of the more grotesque footnotes to this unnecessary tragedy. In reality, Britain has little independence. Its main function is to provide mercenaries to buttress U.S. hegemony. This is not simply a view from the Left. In his remarkably frank book, *The Grand Chessboard*, which inspired Madeleine Albright's offensive foreign policy, Zbigniew Brezinski stresses the need to encourage European unity even though "The brutal fact is that Western Europe, and increasingly also Central Europe, remains largely an American protectorate, with its allied states reminiscent of ancient vassals," and "Great Britain is not a geo-strategic player ... it is America's key supporter, a very loyal ally, a vital military base, and a close partner in critically important intelligence activities. Its friendship needs to be nourished, but its policies do not call for sustained attention."

There, in a nutshell, is the grim reality of contemporary Britain. If the island ever disappeared underneath the sea, the United States could simply replace it with a large aircraft carrier. New Labour has tied itself with an even tougher umbilical cord to the domestic needs of capitalism and the global needs of the U.S. military and foreign policy establishment. Sooner or later it will pay the price.

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The Need for a Radical Alternative: Interview with István Mészáros

by Elias Kanellis

1. From the modern vision, the great revolutions, the anti-Nazi war, to the collapse of socialism in East Europe and to the sovereignty of the market, what do you think about the twentieth century—the "century of extremes" as Hobsbawm calls it?

I am very glad you asked this question, because the issues raised in it have far-reaching implications. First, the revolutions. They are best compared to monumental earthquakes. The mountain ranges they bring to the surface cannot be undone and pushed back into the earth's belly. Take this example of conservative wishful thinking by a prominent member of President Kennedy's Brain Trust, Walt Rostow, who eagerly tried to undo the Russian Revolution by saying that: "if the First World War had not occurred—or had occurred a decade later—Russia would almost certainly have made a

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successful transition to modernization and rendered itself invulnerable to communism."

Such argumentation by "counter-factual conditionals" would not get a good mark even at the lowest level of introductory philosophy; but propagandistic eagerness hails it as profound wisdom. In truth, however, great revolutions reverberate over centuries, until their underlying causes are resolved. "After-shocks" can be almost as powerful as the original earthquake itself. Moreover, their significance is not confined to the locality where they first erupt. Thus the French Revolution of 1789 shook North America as well as the whole of Europe. And even today, 210 years later, it retains in many ways its historical relevance, on account of the demands it raised, which still remain unrealized. Whatever happened to *liberty, fraternity, equality*? They have been either completely eliminated from public consciousness, or reduced to a formalistic skeleton. Indeed, on the two hundredth anniversary of the French revolution the world political dignitaries assembled in Paris were not ashamed of listening respectfully to the tirades of Margaret Thatcher against the French Revolution and in favor of the invincibility of her side.

The premature burial of the French Revolution well illustrates the foolishness and political bias of those who engage in it. It is likewise foolish and politically biased to try to bury the October Revolution of 1917, just because of what happened in its place of origin ten years ago. It was a revolution with socialist aspirations which cannot be wiped out of history. Its reverberations included the Hungarian Council Republic of 1919; the German upheavals in the years following the First World War; the Chinese Revolution from 1927 to 1949; the Cuban revolution of 1957; the colonial liberation struggles in Africa and Southeast Asia, and the struggle of the Vietnamese people, successfully defying the might of the United States in its war of aggression. We may also remember that in China they are celebrating in our days the fiftieth anniversary of the victory of their revolution which extricated the country from long foreign domination. Whatever the troubles and contradictions in all these areas, the socialist aspirations which in-

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spired October 1917 have not disappeared from twentieth century history.

If we look at the earth-shaking upheavals from this perspective, the picture of the twentieth century is much more positive than many people—mainly those called by the Italians *i pentiti*—now present it. The same people, in the past, were busy producing absurdly rosy pictures of the same historic events.

In sum: we must bear in mind that moving from one social formation—i.e., in our case from capital's mode of social metabolic reproduction—to its radical alternative (which appeared in practical terms on our historical horizon a little over eight decades ago) is an immensely complicated and troubled social process, not only with moves forward but also suffering major relapses. But no relapses, no matter how great and tragic, can extinguish the human aspirations and forces pressing for a qualitative transformation.

As to the "sovereignty of global markets," in this regard several major qualifications are required: 1.) the most fundamental of them is that—notwithstanding all capitalist triumphalism—half of the world's population does not reproduce its conditions of existence according to the rules of the "sovereign global market." Think of the majority of India's vast population; or of the thousand million plus of China's 1250 million people. In China one can speak of relatively small capitalist enclaves, and even those under the overall political control of the non-capitalist Chinese state. To this we must add a major part of Africa and Southeast Asia (e.g. many millions of people who are subsistence-farming in Indonesia, and therefore all talk in front of them about 'the sovereign market' would sound like a joke in bad taste). And we should also remember in this respect a far from negligible part of Latin America.

Even in Russia, fifteen years after Gorbachev's ill-fated attempts, we find the failure to restore capitalism, except in the mafia-ridden big cities. Millions of Russian workers do not receive their wages for months; many of them for as long as one year and a half. Try and run a "market economy" on a wageless basis!

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In all these respects we have to face the great historical failure of the capital system to complete itself, as a global system, in its properly capitalist form. Moreover, it is inconceivable—for a number of grave reasons, including the prohibitive ecological costs implicit in the capitalist developmental process—that "advanced capitalism," with its "sovereign market," could globally complete itself in the future.

2.) Even in the capitalist West "market sovereignty" must be treated with critical qualifications There used to be many political jokes told in the East, which took the form of questions addressed to "Yerevan Radio." One of them ran like this: "Is it true that luxurious American motor cars will be given away on Saturday on Moscow Square?" The answer came: "Yes, comrade, it is perfectly true; with three qualifications: 1.) They won't be American, they will be Russian; 2.) They won't be motor cars, they will be bicycles; and 3.) They won't be given away; they will be taken away." Somewhat similar qualifications must be made about our "sovereign markets" and their "perfect competition." For three main reasons: a.) we find ever greater monopolistic developments in every capitalist country (evidently, they are not enhancers of "market sovereignty" but, on the contrary, they represent a domineering interference with it, tending to undermine and ultimately endanger the market in any meaningful sense of the term); b.) our "sovereign markets" are characterized by the massive protective involvement of the state (from "common agricultural policies" to "export guarantees," and from huge research funds put at the disposal of capitalist enterprises free of charge, to the astronomical sums given over to the "military industrial complex"); and c) "transnational globalization," in accordance with the prevailing power relations, distorts enormously the economic market relations, in favor of the hegemonic superpower, the United States. Robert Reich, President Clinton's former Labor Secretary, did not hesitate to spell out in the clearest terms that the United States will enforce with every means at its disposal its "positive economic nationalism." Even the closest ally of the United States, and a major industrial power in its own right, Great Britain, is forced to suffer the

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impact of these grossly iniquitous power relations. Thus one of the most prominent members of Margaret Thatcher's government, Michael Heseltine, had to protest—though, characteristically, only in his resignation speech—against the negative consequences for Britain of U.S. "technology transfer regulations, American protection laws, extra-territorial controls co-ordinated through the Pentagon and protected by Congress," and against the practice of "funds channelled into the largest and richest companies on earth in such a way that, if the ongoing process continues unchecked, it will buy its way through sector after sector of the world's advanced technologies." It seems, then, that our industrial and political leaders, and expecially the Americans, have been born followers of Yerevan Radio's wisdom of how to qualify the "sovereignty of the market."

2. Is there a place for philosophy and philosophers in the years to come? How can you define their contemporary role? Is there a connection between philosophy and politics?

Yes, perhaps more than ever before. For intellectual production—under the pressure of capital's imperatives and determinations—tends to be fragmented into countless specialisms, at the great detriment of the comprehensive dimension. But philosophy cannot renounce addressing itself to comprehensive issues. Such issues do not disappear, just because the prevailing fashions neglect them. In this neglect there is also a powerful ideological determination: the ruling order takes itself absolutely for granted, admitting only the possibility (and legitimacy) of marginal correctives, but never the viability of comprehensive alternatives. If philosophy agrees to that, it commits suicide.

The connection between philosophy and politics is a necessary one. Politics affects the life of everybody. No one can opt out. For this reason, I always say to my students that politics is far too important to be left to politicians, even to the most far-sighted of them. In the course of history the power of comprehensive decision making has been alienated from the social individuals, and appropriated by professional politics. This is a gravely iniquitous and ultimately untenable condi-

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tion. Philosophers—from the time of Greek Antiquity to the present—tried to intervene in the process aimed at actively redressing the situation. Not surprisingly, though, the relationship between philosophy and politics was very far from being a happy one. It is enough to mention here the names of Plato, Campanella, Giordano Bruno, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza, Marx, Gramsci, and Lukacs to illustrate this point. They all had to suffer, severely, for their active intervention in politics.

The challenge in this respect is very great today, given the profound crisis of politics itself. We know the old definition of politics as "the art of the possible." But we also hear with ever greater frequency—from every shade of governmental wisdom—that "there is no alternative." Margaret Thatcher used to repeat it *ad nauseam*, and in her footsteps also Mikhail Gorbachev; until they had to find out that there could be and there had to be an alternative to both of them. In any case, the wisdom of "there is no alternative"—which insists that "the art of the possible" means that "the possible is impossible" is an indictment of the decisionmaking processes of our time. Philosophy is concerned with the cause of human emancipation, and therefore must challenge the prevailing wisdom which emanates from capital's narrowing margins for the production of even small improvements. Indeed, capital must take back today even past improvements, as demonstrated by its attacks on the Welfare State. This is why the role of philosophy today is perhaps greater than ever before.

3. You are talking about "Socialisme ou barbarie," as Castoriadis did in a more extreme period. In the Europe of social democracy and its "third way," in the period of globalization, do you think that great mass movements have a chance to blossom again?

It is true that Castoriadis, Lyotard, and some others once upon a time had a journal called *Socialisme ou barbarie*. Sadly, however, they completely abandoned that project, and—having made their peace with the established order—they ended up producing theories which were meant to prove that there can be no way out of that order.

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My own use of Rosa Luxemburg's striking phrase is very different. I show in my paper that—in contrast to Luxemburg's time, when her warning had a still indeterminate temporal character—in our own days the alternative (first formulated by Marx in 1845) has a truly dramatic urgency.

Given the way in which the ongoing trends of global development assert themselves, in a clearly identifiable way, we may have perhaps a few decades to bring to a halt their destructiveness, but certainly not centuries. The great liberal economist, Schumpeter, used to characterize—and idealize—capitalism as a system of "productive destruction." This was, on the whole, true of capital's ascending phase of development. Today, by contrast, we have reached a stage when, instead of "productive destruction," we are ever increasingly confronted by capital's destructive production, proceeding on a frightening scale.

You ask: "do you think that great mass movements have a chance to blossom again" in the age of globalization and under the "third way" of European social democracy? For me the "third way" is nothing more than a wishful fantasy, in defence of the established, untenable, order. Sociologists like Max Scheler have been predicting for almost a century the merging of the classes into a happy "middle class"—one could only wonder: the middle of what? In reality, social polarization in our time is greater than ever before, making a mockery of the old social democratic expectations of eliminating—or at least greatly reducing—inequality through "progressive taxation." As things turned out, we saw the diametrical opposite. To give you just two, very recent, examples: 1.) according to the Budget Office of the U.S. Congress (no "left-wing exaggerator," for sure), the income of the top 1 percent is equivalent to that of the bottom one hundred million people, i.e., nearly 40 percent of the population. Twenty years ago it was "only" 1 percent against forty-nine million, i.e., less than twenty percent of the U.S. population. Some "equalization" and "merging of the classes into one another!" 2.) In England child poverty trebled in the last twenty years, and continued to be aggravated under the "New Labour" government in the last two and a half years. The "New Labour" government

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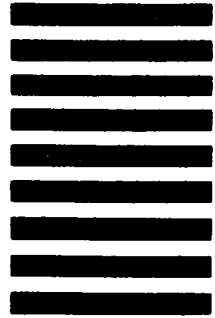

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preaches the vacuous "third way" sermon, and practices with ever greater severity the politics of antilabor measures, imposing even such policies which Mrs. Thatcher did not dare to introduce, cutting the Welfare State in every possible way, including even the precarious livelihood of the handicapped. Only a fool can assume that this can go on forever.

So, in answer to your question, I am firmly convinced that there is a future for a radical mass movement, not only in England but also in the rest of the world. Or, to put it in another way, if there is no future for such a movement, there can be no future for humanity itself. If I had to modify Rosa Luxemburg's dictum, in relation to the dangers we face, I would add to "socialism or barbarism:" "barbarism if we are lucky"—in the sense that the extermination of humankind is the ultimate concomitant of capital's destructive course of development. And the world of that third possibility, beyond the alternatives of "socialism or barbarism," would be fit only for cockroaches, which are said to be able to endure lethally high levels of nuclear radiation. This is the only rational meaning of capital's third way.

4. What do you think about cultural globalization?

"Cultural globalization" inescapably goes with socioeconomic and political globalization, and is subject to the same contradictions.The capital system is a thoroughly hierarchical one in which the weaker members are always at the receiving end. The "pecking order" is determined by the prevailing socioeconomic and political power relations. In this sense, the question of cultural globalization is inseparable from the antagonisms of contemporary imperialism. Thus the dominant imperialist power—the United States—is doing everything it can get away with in order to impose on the rest of the world its cultural hegemonism; naturally, in the name of "democracy" and the "free circulation" of cultural products. The power relations actually embedded in the material vehicles of "free cultural circulation" remain hidden: they range from film distributive networks (which ram down the throats of everybody even the tenth-rate products of Hollywood) to giant media-empires, to telecommunication and satellite sta-

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tions, and to the institutions devised to be the international watchdogs of American "intellectual property rights."

Paul Baran already, in 1957, described the other former colonial powers as "junior partners of American imperialism." This characterization remains true also in the domain of "cultural globalization." The "junior partners" also try to impose their cultural interests on the smaller countries, to the extent to which this is compatible with their subsidiary role as strictly junior partners of the United States.

Naturally, all this generates great resentment among all those who are at the receiving end. The future in this respect is bound to bring significant conflicts and the defense of legitimate national cultural interests against the encroaching powers. But this is likely to be a very painful process, because the odds are very strongly in favor of the economically and politically dominant powers.

5. Is the answer "nation-state" convincing enough opposite globalization? Would you accept the term "ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo from the Serbs?

No, taking refuge in the "nation-state" from the troubled waters of globalization is certainly not convincing enough. For we are talking about a process dense with contradictions. The "nation-states" are not outsiders to globalization but an integral part of it. In the same way as we cannot opt out of politics, the nation-states cannot opt out of transnational globalization. Like it or not, they actively participate in it, according to their relative prominence in the global pecking order of capital.

What is important to bear in mind here is that the nation-state constitutes the reality of capital's most comprehensive political command structure. For there is no such thing as the global state of the capital system as such; only particular states, however strong or weak. This is a tremendous contradiction, which becomes particularly acute in our own time. And there can be no way of overcoming it, notwithstanding the fact that transnational globalization itself arises from the irrepressible logic of capital, and therefore cannot be brought to an end before it plays itself out. The implications of this state of affairs are grievous. We have witnessed two devastating world wars as

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a result of one of the big national states attempting to make its own state formation prevail over the others. Today, when globalization is in full swing, the imperative to make the most powerful state impose itself as the "globally pre-eminent" state (U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot's expression) over against all of the others is that much greater, and the dangers also accordingly greater. So here, again, we face an antagonism—between globalizing transnational capitals and the national states—which can only be solved by a genuinely socialist alternative. In the meantime, the antagonism can only intensify, projecting the possibility of a catastrophic collision at some point in the not too distant future.

As to the notion of "ethnic cleansing," it is a horrendous concept, reflecting the chronic insolubility of inter-ethnic and inter-state conflicts under the rule of capital. But it is not confined to Kosovo. It must be also remembered that 270, 000 Serbs have been "ethnically cleansed" from Krajina, under American supervision; and now the Serbs themselves are overwhelmingly "cleansed" from Kosovo itself; maybe another two hundred thousand of them.

All these problems are crying out for a viable solution, on the basis of a substantive equality between individuals and social groups. Substantive equality, however, is structurally incompatible with capital's mode of social control.

6. What do you think about the United Nations' politics for human rights?

The record of the UN on human rights is painfully bad, and understandably—though by no means justifiably—so. For the UN has been (and still is) dominated by the United States: the country with innumerable violations of human rights all over the world. It is enough to remember here a long history of extreme human rights violations, from the Philippines at the turn of the century to installing Marcos there after the war; from the invasion of Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Grenada to the Vietnam war; from installing Suharto in Indonesia (and five hundred thousand ethnic Chinese murdered in the course of Suharto's U.S.-backed counterrevolution) to imposing and sustaining dictatorial regimes in Latin America (including Pinochet) and

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Africa; not to forget the Middle East and the Colonels' Dictatorship in Greece: the list is endless. Yet, the UN—and the Western powers so keen to justify their military actions in the Balkans in the name of human rights—did not move a little finger to even restrain, let alone to put an end to, such violations. Nowadays leading American political figures quite unashamedly admit that they were using the Helsinki accords on human rights as a convenient weapon against the Soviet Union. Just like they were using the "China card"—under Nixon and Kissinger—against the Soviets, and the "Russian card" against the Chinese in the Vietnam war. The cynicisms of big power politics is thus dressed up in the hypocritically embellished suits of—extremely selective—concern with human rights. For while the war in Kosovo, for instance, was sonorously justified in the name of human rights, the "Western democracies" (as they like to call themselves) did nothing to counter the most brutal violation of human rights—at times bordering on genocide—by the Turks against the Kurds, or at the time of the extermination of almost one million people in Rwanda. And there is yet another form of gross violation of human rights: the death of one million children in Iraq as a result of sanctions continued to be imposed by the United States, and rubber-stamped by the UN with the total subservience of the allies of the United States. No one can take seriously the UN as the protector of human rights for as long as the actual power relations of world politics make a mockery of human rights concerns.

7. What is the U.S. role in the new state of things? What do you think about the future of Europe?

With the implosion of the Soviet system the United States acquired a global dominance as the one remaining military superpower. It maintains its military bases in sixty-nine countries, totally dominating NATO—at the last NATO summit redefined as a self-legitimating aggressive force—as well as the far eastern military alliances, especially the "U.S.-Japan security treaty:" now similarly redefined as a "legitimately offensive force," in total violation of the Japanese Constitution which renounces war. All this, however, cannot be considered an

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enduring solution. For U.S. global domination—or "U.S. global pre-eminence" in Strobe Talbot's more polite words—is dense with potentially explosive antagonisms. The most serious aspect of these objective antagonisms is the coming confrontation with China. For liberal economists now predict that by 2020, China's economy will be three times bigger than that of the United States. Facing such prospects, the old "China lobby" in Washington is more active today than ever before, inducing Rear Admiral Eugene Carroll—head of the Centre of Defence Information, an independent think-tank—to comment: "There is a demonization of China here, orchestrated to show China as the yellow peril." There is also a lot of talk about a necessary "preventive strike" against China.

At the same time, despite all appearances, we should not forget the objective antagonisms and serious conflicts of interest between the United States and Europe. This is bound to intensify in the future, even if the United States will be able to continue to enforce its domination over Europe in the near future. Europe itself is also torn internally by contradictions, manifest at the moment most clearly by the English Conservative Party's attempt to blow up the European Union as a political entity, retaining it only as a common trade area: a policy which at the moment commands the majority in England, as demonstrated by the Conservative Party's victory at the recent European Parliamentary elections. All the same, the attempts to break up the European community will not succeed, although the pressure to do so will grow, and not only in England. Here, again, we face a typical contradiction of the system, whereby neither an untroubled integrative cooperation or federation of the national members is feasible, nor can they individually go it alone after the envisaged break-up. To solve this contradiction would require a very different way of relating the particular national communities to one another than what the insurmountable constraints of the capital system allow.

8. Finally, now is the end of "Great narratives"—as Lyotard says? Are the great visions for a better world finished?

Lyotard's discourse on "grand narratives" and "little récits"—following in the footsteps of conservative thinkers

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who, for a very long time, were insisting on the one and only viable and legitimate method of changing "little by little"—was his way of making peace with the established order, turning his back to his own past of *Socialisme ou barbarie.* If we consider these propositions from a critical distance, we find that they undermine themselves. For without a comprehensive strategic framework into which the "little récits" are inserted, there can be no guarantee whatsoever that the accumulation of "little by little" will produce even a little good, rather than utter disaster. Lyotard was trying to make a paradigm—one should say, rather, a myth—out of the local administration's computer at a small French town of Yverdon, which was supposed to take on board the opinions and concerns of the local people. Needless to say, the paradigmatic computer could not make the slightest difference even to the population of Yverdon, let alone to France as a whole. For even if you establish an ideal way of registering the opinions of a locality, that means nothing by itself in terms of the decision making processes of even that local community, not to mention the required connections with the rest of France and with the much larger decision making processes to which France, too, is subjected. More so today, in the "age of globalization," than ever before.

Thus, the need for comprehensive strategies—with their viable mediations of the particular modalities of action at all levels, from the "microcosms" of societal reproduction to the highest levels of national and transnational interchange—could not be greater. And one more thing needs to be stressed here: while we must be alert to the immense dangers on our horizon and oppose them with all means at our disposal, negations alone are not enough. It is equally necessary to spell out, in as great a detail as possible, the positive alternative. For the chosen target of social action, if positively defined, has a vital bearing on the feasibility of success. If nothing else, this should be amply clear from the painful lessons of the collapse of so-called "actually existing socialism:" the prisoner, throughout its history, of negative determinations. Also for this reason, the "visions for a better world" are very far from finished, but remain on the historical agenda today.

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9. What is the meaning of the "Left"—now and in the future?

The way the "Left" had acquired its name was a matter of historical contingency. Something like driving on the right side of the road, rather than on the left, as in England. However, it is not a matter of indifference on which side of the road you drive in both directions, making the traffic flow rather than getting inextricably stuck in a chaotic gridlock within the shortest time.

Those who argued (and argue) that there can no longer be any significant difference between "Left" and "Right," want us to believe that there is no real difference between regularly flowing traffic—even in almost prohibitively high-density Athens—and an absurdly self-imposed total gridlock.

Despite all mystifications, generated by massive vested interests—which self-contradictorily want to maintain that the "Left" is only a historical anachronism, but the "Radical Right" of neoliberalism is a perfectly coherent notion—the Left (or more precisely, a variety of Left forces) remains in existence. It has suffered in the recent past some major setbacks, but it remains a thorn in the flesh of the established order. At the last annual Conference of "New Labour"—and no one should accuse the latter of being on the left, even if many of its, now completely marginalized, members are—Tony Blair declared that he will fight "against the conservatism of the right and the left," meaning of course only the left, which the present leadership could not quite eliminate. Naturally, the political left is far more extensive than what we find in former social democratic parties. Also today, the Left means projecting alternatives to the existent. Its fragmentation and divisions today are a major obstacle to the Left's successful intervention in the political process.

As to the future, the deepening structural crisis of the capital system is bound to confront the Left with a great historical challenge: to work out and realize a comprehensive strategy that could show a way out of the destructive trends of development of our social order. What can be said with absolute certainty is that the Right, in any one of its existing or potential configurations, will not offer to us anything of the kind.

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Us Versus Them: Laboring in the Academic Factory

by Michael Yates

Ten Tales from Academe at the End of the Century

Consider the following items culled from some of the journals, newspapers, and email discussion groups to which I subscribe:

1. Administrators at York University in Toronto solicited corporations to place corporate logos on online courses conducted by the University, for ten thousand dollars per course.

2. City University of New York canceled most of its remedial classes. The University of Pittsburgh eliminated special programs for underprepared (and typically poor and black) students while beginning an honor's college.

3. The University of Pittsburgh, awash in corporate and defense department money, canceled sabbatical leaves at our campus without faculty input. The VPAA, formerly just Dean,

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has begun to unilaterally implement major changes in tenure requirements.

4. Several universities have cut lucrative deals with credit card companies, allowing them campus monopolies as credit purveyors. At one campus, the credit card company pays for student radio and television shows.

5. The so-called "University" of Phoenix, a private, for-profit virtual college, now has ninety-eight campuses in thirty-one states and enrollment of more than fifty-five thousand students. "It has aggressively applied business strategies such as convenience, customer service, mass production, and corporate partnerships on its march across the country." Phoenix has heavy-duty corporate customers, including Kodak, IBM, and GE and will be aggressively competing for the millions of adult students preparing for the multiple job changes former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich says we will all be making over the course of our working lives.

6. The California State University system was preparing to "hand control of its inter-campus computer and telecommunications system to a private consortia managed by Microsoft and its hardware allies, GTE, Hughes, and Fujitsu." This privatization of public education (which, fortunately, has been stalled due to well-organized political opposition) was fueled by the same forces that have led to the privatization of all sorts of public services, from garbage collection to prisons to college food services and campus police.

7. Historian David Noble tells us that "Educom, the academic-corporate consortium, has recently established their Learning Infrastructure Initiative which includes the detailed study of what professors do, breaking the faculty job down in classic Tayloristic fashion into discrete tasks, and determining what parts can be automated or outsourced. Educom believes that course design, lectures, and even evaluation can all be standardized, mechanized, and consigned to outside vendors. 'Today you're looking at a highly personal human-mediated environment,' Educom president Robert Heterich observed. 'The potential to remove human mediation in some areas and replace it with automation—smart, computer-based, network-

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based systems—is tremendous. It's gotta happen.'"("Digital Diploma Mills," *Monthly Review*, vol. 49, no. 9, February 1998.)

8. During the first week of this month, in Manhattan's 229 dollar per night (a special rate!) Millennium Broadway Hotel, a conference was held with the title, "Market-Driven Higher Education." The blurb for this conference reads, "It's Not Just Business, It's Your Future: Is Higher Education for Sale? You bet it is. And everyone—corporations, non-profits, government agencies—wants a piece of it. How do you take advantage of market-driven education?" At this conference one could hear such luminaries as Benno Schmidt (former president of Yale and advisor to CCNY for the Mussolini of New York, Rudolph Giuliani) expound on such topics as "What the Market Wants," and "The University Toolbox" (to discuss "creating for-profit subsidiaries, finding start-up capital, structuring deals, solving intellectual property problems, and more.") Remarkably, the organizers of the conference tell attendees that you will "learn new ways of doing business, explore innovative deals and joint ventures, discover what funding sources want for their investment dollars, cope with resistance on the home front, and *still retain your core values.*"(emphasis mine)

9. In Silicon Valley; in Cambridge, MA; Dallas, TX; and around the country, high-tech industries and their nearby universities are becoming more and more integrated as faculty and administrators spin off businesses from publicly funded research and businesses brazenly use the universities as launch pads for new products and technologies.

10. According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), non-tenure track faculty now account for about half of all faculty appointments in U.S. higher education. Part-time faculty now account for about 38 percent of faculty appointments. The AAUP further reports that, "The average of 38% of all faculty who are part-time reaches 52 percent of all faculty in community colleges . . . Some community colleges depend on poorly paid, non-tenure track faculty members to remain in existence. Many of these institutions have no tenure system and appoint only a few full-time faculty

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members to organize and supervise a large department of part-time faculty."

Brothers and Sisters, We'd Better Wake Up

On the last page of the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels say, "Workers of all countries, unite." Now, I know that today, if pressed, many—even most—college teachers would say that Marx and Engels were not talking about them. They might admit that business interests dominate their boards of trustees; after all, Veblen wrote about this in 1918. And they might agree that there is considerable disparity between the pay and power of college administrators and themselves. However, they would not consider themselves to be anything as common as workers. Some may feel this way because they share fully the business values of the board members and most administrators, or at least believe that such values are necessary for the efficient operations of the universities. Not a few of them may aspire to be administrators someday . Others may think that, despite the values of board members, colleges are still somehow different from other workplaces. Colleges are places where administrators and teachers are colleagues, where these two groups settle their differences peacefully and without rancor. Many professors think of themselves as professionals, insulated from the crassness of the marketplace and the hurly-burly of the outside world of work. They are economists or chemists or mathematicians, not employees, much less workers. Administrators are simply persons whose job it is to facilitate the professors' search for the truth; they are not "bosses." Unions may be all right for steelworkers and coal miners, as the chancellor of our university once said in an anti-union memo sent to the faculty during an organizing campaign, but not for these professionals.

I must admit there are a few colleges or universities in which this academic fantasy is at least partially true. The senior professors in Harvard's economics department, for example, could not reasonably be described as workers. They really are "professionals," allied closely with the society's movers and shakers (among whom are members of Harvard's governing

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board), as are Harvard's senior administrators. But for most of the rest of us, toilers in academe's lower circles, this fantasy is just that, a delusion we cling to at our peril. I do not think it ever had any real truth to it, but today, it has no connection to reality whatsoever. For one thing has become clear: our colleges and universities, more and more, resemble academic factories, workplaces not much different in terms of their mode of operation than the glass factory in which my father labored or the day care center in which my wife and my daughter once worked.

Radical changes are occurring in academe, and I predict that in a few decades most colleges and universities will be unrecognizable to those of us who work in them today; that is, of course, unless we are willing to do something about it. In higher education today, the primary logic of a capitalist economy has finally struck us with full force. Unless we act, the result will be nothing less than the devolution of academe into an academic factory.

Our economic system is driven by the accumulation of capital, that is, by an attempt by the small minority of persons who own society's productive wealth to maximize both the profits and the growth of their enterprises. This drive is incessant and gradually engulfs not only all of the globe but nearly every aspect of life in every nation on earth. Before the Second World War, our colleges and universities essentially served as training grounds for the economic elite, preparing them both to run their corporations and the machinery of the state, which has always served to aid and abet the accumulation process. After the war, when the industrial working class was poised to alter radically the nation's political economic landscape, higher learning was, for the first time, opened up to large masses of non-elites. These graduates filled the rising number of managerial and technical jobs opened up by the tremendous postwar boom in the U.S. economy. However, as business employed its battery of managerial control techniques, such as the detailed division of labor and mechanization, relatively fewer of these graduates were needed to do skilled work. At the same time, more and more working-class

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people were demanding access to higher education (for example, ethnic minorities and women), both energized by the civil rights movements of the 1960s. The cultural revolution of this decade helped to bring this contradiction to a head. In its wake, college administrators, spurred on by business interests and their political allies, began to push schools away from the potentially radicalizing liberal arts toward a more career-oriented and narrowly technical curriculum.

Just as these changes were beginning, the long postwar boom ended—the consequence of intensifying global competition and its resultant overproduction. Profit margins plummeted, and corporations began to scramble to restore them. Their strategy to do this involved, first, an all-out assault on workers and their unions and a restructuring of work organization that has come to be known as "lean production." This managerial system involves the intensification of work (speedup), the elimination of full-time jobs and the use of a variety of contingent workers, the outsourcing of as much indirect labor as possible, the use of work teams that are given the illusion of decisionmaking power by the employer, and the use of electronic technology (developed, by the way, at public expense), that reduces the need for skilled workers and improves management's ability to monitor and control every aspect of the labor process. Second, corporations aggressively began to seek new fields of capital accumulation. For example, the growth of new, knowledge-based industries (such as telecommunications, computers, biotechnology, and electronics) led to the commodification of ideas, which soon became intellectual property, protected by laws and trade agreements. Third, business placed great pressure on government at all levels to cut severely all public expenditures not directly related to capital accumulation (broadly construed to include spending on defense and police).

This period of economic crisis had profound effects on our colleges and universities, effects similar in most respects to what was going on in the production of more mundane goods and services, from automobiles to airline tickets. Faced with budget crises, administrators became increasingly cost con-

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scious. Cost cutting began in earnest, mainly through the employment of part-time and adjunct teachers and full-time professors outside of the tenure stream. A business mentality began to pervade the schools, and one result was the hiring of nonacademics to administer them. (The conquest of academe by this business mentality can be seen today in the corporate titles of administrators). Colleges also began to solicit corporate funding more actively, to substitute for the decline in public funding.

The closer interface between business and higher education opened the eyes of business to new opportunities to make money. Costs could be externalized if research and development could be done in the universities and transferred to corporations. This meant a de-emphasis on basic scientific research and a focus on research that would yield immediate returns. (Creative ways must sometimes be found to disguise research for a specific corporation as more abstract general research). A big breakthrough occurred when universities were given the legal right to own patents on university-conducted research. This was seen by schools as a potentially large moneymaker and by the corporations as cheap capital. All sorts of university-corporate deals were made; spinoff businesses were formed; and some faculty and administrators got rich. The consequences for most of us, though, were spiraling tuition, as the schools spent enormous sums on the fixed capital (labs and equipment, for example) necessary for the production of patentable research; swelling class sizes; falling real faculty salaries; and further use of contingent teachers.

Once a production space becomes a site of capital accumulation, the process becomes inexorable. As Noble points out, the commodification of academic research has been followed by that of instruction itself; in fact, he argues, this second commodification is being touted as the solution to the crisis in education caused by the first. Corporations and their academic allies are rushing to produce and sell software and hardware. As I have said elsewhere, "The electronic revolution confronts us with the most extreme assault on our traditional patterns of work. The handwriting is on the wall. The future

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will see more and more distance education, the cloning of lectures captured on video and sent out over the web, the forcing of faculty to put their courses online, increased electronic monitoring of faculty effort, and other such methods of substituting capital for labor."

As any thoughtful person can see, these trends in higher education are absolutely incompatible with traditional academic work arrangements. The corporate-administrative juggernaut cannot do what it pleases as long as we control the conceptualization and execution of work, have tenure, and exert real pressure on managerial decisions. Therefore, we are witnessing the implementation of lean production inside of our ivy-covered walls. Tenure is on the ropes, to put it mildly, a victim of management's war of attrition and a propaganda campaign portraying us as hidebound, lazy, and privileged. We are facing continual speed-up and denial of traditional faculty rights such as sabbaticals, travel budgets, and the right to be consulted before important managerial decisions are made.

What is more, the debasement of our labor coincides with the debasement of education. Management tells us that our students are consumers of a product, no different in principle than the fact that they are consumers of CD players and sneakers. We must be concerned only with the quality of our product, but the clear implication is that education must be put on a par with CD players if education's quality is to be measured in the same way as that of the CD player. Measurable competencies are taking the place of all-round education, something which (by its very nature) cannot be measured or quality-controlled. And as students pick up on this notion of themselves as consumers of a measurable product, they come to treat education as a purchase. Just as it is unreasonable for the supplier to expect that any real effort beyond the purchase has to be exerted by the buyer of a CD player, so too it is unreasonable for us to expect anything from our students. In fact, in the new market-driven colleges, we more or less disappear, a part of the product purchased by the student-consumers.

What is happening in much of higher education is occurring throughout U.S. industry. An unstated reason for the attack

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on teachers is the unwillingness of corporate capital to tolerate the bad example that our traditional way of working provides for other workers.

No group of workers can be allowed to have real control over their work; this is the province of the management. But as our labor is daily demeaned and devalued, we become just like other workers. There is no basis whatsoever either for us to feel superior to other workers or for them to consider us as thoroughly unlike them. We have more in common with auto workers, meatpackers, and clerical employees than we have with our employers. And this offers us some hope. For it is possible to resist the corporatization of the academy. Some of us have unionized and are using unions to fight back. This is a very good thing and ought to be embraced by millions of other teachers around the country. Already the most exploited teachers (the graduate assistants, adjuncts, and part-timers) are organizing, and we should encourage and support these efforts.

However, we are going to need help, and the best source of this aid is the rest of the working class. We need to elicit the support of other workers, including many of our students. We need to ally ourselves with the other workers on our own campuses, supporting their organizing drives, bargaining, and strikes, as well as their informal struggles in nonunion settings. We need to participate actively in the central labor councils of our towns and counties, insisting on union support for our struggles and offering our support for the struggles of other unions. The same can be said for progressive community groups and their struggles. As educators, we might begin to offer informal classes for other groups of workers. And we can, whenever possible, bring a working-class perspective into our own college classrooms and discuss not only labor history and working-class culture but the nature of work itself, in general and in our own workplaces. Students need to know what awaits them unless they, too, fight back; they need to know that we are sympathetic and will fight for them and for ourselves.

All of these things matter greatly. Of course, unionization makes us much better off in terms of wages, benefits, and terms and conditions of employment. It gives us a voice in our

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workplaces, and it compels our employers to treat us with some dignity. But building bridges, building a movement, also pays off, as the great labor crusade of the 1930s demonstrates. A strong working class changes all political parameters and makes possible what is only a dream otherwise. If we want to reverse what is happening to us, we must participate not only in our own struggles but in the larger struggle to build an egalitarian and democratic society—one in which critical education is seen as a social good, and in which preparing students simply to be team players, adaptable to whatever the winds of economic change blow their way, is seen as a form of social insanity.

Let me conclude by rephrasing Marx's and Engel's famous exhortation: "Teachers of the world, you are workers too. Unite."

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Renato Constantino, 1919-1999

by Frederic Clairmont

After an arduous and protracted illness, Renato Constantino (humanist, anti-Japanese resistance fighter, paramount social scientist of his nation, teacher, and journalist extraordinaire) has tragically departed from our lives. He was a shaft of dazzling analytical light, of generosity combined with a compulsive desire to write and to persuade but never to coerce. His decades-long writing and struggles against imperialism remain his lasting testament to humanity. He enriched his friends, and thousands of readers and students in the Philippines and elsewhere, who had the privilege of being enlightened by him.

The last time we met was in his native Manila, on the occasion of a meeting of the prestigious *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, on whose editorial board we had both sat since its founding. I read all, or almost all, of his major books, spanning several decades: thirty-six in all. Before I began writing this essay, I spent a good part of an evening perusing his great

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creations. An appalling sadness pervaded my soul as I walked away from my library shelves. What staggered me was not merely the continuity of his thought but its greenness, which never faded.

It was in the relaxed and inspired atmosphere in Havana in 1981 (when Renato was vice-chair of the meeting of third-world economists) that we exchanged ideas at length in nightly walks on the Malecon. I was amazed by his encyclopedic knowledge of the history of the Americas. It was in that context that he evaluated Cuba from colony to the first socialist country of the Americas. He saw the Cuban revolution, like the revolution in Vietnam, as one of the greatest liberating events in the twentieth century's turbulent history.

Renato had been molded by the repressive forces of his nation's history and, in all respects, he was a fervent nationalist wedded to a passionate internationalism. "And it's for this reason that I'm in Cuba today," he said with that inimitable smile. The year of his birth was of epochal significance, coinciding with the Treaty of Versailles that ended our century's first great imperialist holocaust (1914 to 1918). However, it was not only an imperialist Frankenstein but a war for the redivision of of the world market, with all its calamitous reverberations. It signaled the onset of the wars of intervention savagely unleashed against the first workers' and peasants' state; the mass shooting of Indian resisters protesting peacefully against the racialist and exploitative hell of the British Raj; the revolutionary stirrings in the Philippines and China; the first organized plantation strikes in the British West Indies; and the killings in the U.S. banana republics in Central America, engineered by the United Fruit Company.

Renato's gift was that he never quit the learning trajectory; his was a permanent quest for new perceptions of reality and new ways of changing inherited realities. Everything was subjetced to critical analysis and he embraced with fervor Marx's dictum *De omnibus dubitandum.* His credo was that the true revolutionary was not just one who grasped the laws of motion of contemporary capital, but one who set out relentlessly to change his or her entire being. A voracious reader from his

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youth, he was introduced in the Thirties to nationalist literature and to the Marxist classics. These included Rajani Palme Dutt's *Facism and the Social Revolution* and *India Today.* Like many in his progressive generation, Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* had widened his horizons, as did Nehru's *Discovery of India* (as they did for tens of thosands within the Philippines and outside). No less vital were the long, tormenting shadows of the Great Depression of 1929 and the gasps of international captialism trapped in one of its most apoplectic seizures. Organically related to these violent economic convulsions were the unstoppable juggernaut of Japanese, Italian, and Hitlerian fascism that rolled on with the euphoric blessings of the major "democratic" imperialist countries.

I recalled to him on one occasion the utterance of Cordell Hull (a member of FDR's cabinet), who opened every official discourse with the bald affirmation: "I'm an anti-imperialist." Someone raised the question: that being so, why has the colonial power not given the country its independence? His curt answer was: "We brought civilization to them, didn't we?" Renato tore to shreds the monstrous veil of hypocrisy that shrouded the vileness of the system. "Whatever the form," he would say, "colonialism is wholly incompatible with human dignity." This was a scintillating formula that would be extended to the brown-skinned political swindlers of the post-colonial regime. "Imperialism," he intoned, "is pivoted on bayonets but no less important are its cheap refurbished rationalizations about freedon, civilization and a panoply of more transparent lies." His two major works, written with his lifelong collaborator and wife, Letitzia, were *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (1975) and *The Philippines: A Continuing Past* (1978). Immediately acclaimed as the apogee of Philippine historical scholarship, they became a beacon for a younger generation of historians, whose past had been egregiously obfuscated by the colonial hangman and his native compradors.

No historical reflections better or more poignantly encapsulate the unremitting, dramatic, and eviscerating power of the U.S. killer machine that the scathing prose of the African-American novelist Nelson Perry. Renato replied after I read it

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to him: "It says so much, so eloquently and with such conciseness." It deserves to be quoted in full:

> If the Americans had never committed genocide against the Indians; if they had never incited wars of annihilation between the native peoples of the land, if there had never been a Trail of Tears: if America had never organized and commercialized the kidnapping and sale into slavery of a gentle and defenseless African people; if it had never developed the most widespread brutal, exploitative system of slavery the world has ever known; if it had never sundered and torn and ground Mexico into the dust; if it had never attacked gallant, defenseless Puerto Rico and never turned that lovely land into a cesspool to compete with the cesspool it created in Panama; if it had never bled Latin America of her wealth and had never cast her exhausted people onto the dung heap of disease and ignorance and starvation; if it had never pushed Hiroshima and Nagasaki into the jaws of hell—if America had never done any of these things—history would still create a special bar of judgement for what America did to the Philippines. (From *Black Fire* [New York: 1984]).

Between the Philipppines and its U.S. colonial master, there was no such thing as "an unequal alliance" (to deploy the trite platitude of certain domesticated social scientists, which supposedly describes the nexus between an enslaved people, in whose face the jackboot had been implanted, and their executioners). Renato firmly grapsed, during his university years, the basic truth that all ruling classes (nevermind their clime or skin color) were rooted in, and inseparable from. a repressive state machinery and its political pimps, which defend and perpetuate, at any cost, their power to exploit, their profits, and their entrenched privilege. His analytical focus was therefore the class analysis of imperialism, which demanded rigorous scientific enquiry into its origins, structure, and ideology. Already at the university, Constantino was targeted by the so-called "Commonwealth" president Manuel Quezon, a U.S. political quisling of the same format as Somoza, Batista, and Trujillo. His ignoble quip was not an innocuous boast: "I love 'communists' (sic) so much that I want to see them dead: the more the better." Happily, Constantino survived the U.S. killer squads of Quezon and others.

"I am in my glory when I can sight my gun on some dark skin and pull the trigger," exulted a U.S. rifleman in the Philippines

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in 1898. This is spoken with the same triumphalist, murderous, racialist hate that assassins of his breed had perpetrated for decades, for centuries, against Blacks, Indians in the U.S. heartland and, more recently, against the Holocaust victims in Vietnam and Iraq and Yugoslavia. What these crimes against humanity pinpointed with such laser-like clarity is that the line between U.S. imperialism and the most outrageous depredations of the Hitlerian SS are nonexistent.

I shan't forget his pungent portrait of himself made on one of our nightly strolls on the Malecon. "Writing runs in the blood; but perhaps more important of all is that I regard myself as one drenched in the terrible lessons of history and that's particularly true of my beloved country." The systematic rape to which the Philippines was subjected over a century of colonial gulagism did not signal the end of U.S. exterminism. Hence, there is no need for "a special bar of judgement" with respect to the Philippines. As the writings and teachings of Renato exemplified, in his chiseled and elegant prose, the end of the Second World War was not the terminal point of U.S. fabricated holocausts of third-world peoples.

Anti-Japanese resistance fighters, many of whom were murdered by the goon squads of the U.S. occupation in the aftermath of Japan's capitulation, opened up another phase in his life. True, he escaped the fate of less fortunate comrades, but henceforth he was branded. Victory of the antifascist forces in 1945 blazed new vistas for the enslaved colonial peoples. For Constantino, there was no better vantage point for a study of the grand mutations of such shattering consequences than Turtle Bay. The immediate postwar era coincided with the merciless McCarthyite witch hunts in the United States and the Philippines. He was bulldozed out of his job as a senior diplomat in the Philippine Foreign Service during his sojourn at the United Nations in New York. His U.S. tormentors and their native handlers reached out to the Philippines. He was blacklisted, unable to find teaching jobs. Publishers were ordered not to touch him with a ten foot pole. His ordeal lasted for several years.

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Ferdinand Marcos, a West Point graduate who pillaged billions of dollars with the complicity of U.S. and other transnational corporations (TNCs), recognized in him one of the greatest threats to his kleptocracy and dictatorship. He was put under house arrest. But Marcos never acted on his own. He was deploying his terror tactics on behalf of his paymasters: the big plantation bosses, native and foreign; the transnational finance and industrial corporations that wantonly flouted and battled even the most innocuous reformist measures to curb their billion-dollar bonanzas. The effective boss in all this—then as now—was the U.S. embassy and its muscleman, the U.S. military. To talk of "People's Power," as one of the Philippines' biggest landlords, Corazon Aquino, had done, was bogus sloganeering. Constantino plunged into the attack once again as he did against U.S. strongman Fidel Ramos, another West Point graduate.

While it was true (as he contended) that his internationalism blossomed during the Japanese occupation, it was in the United States that he witnessed the untrammeled arrogance of U.S. imperialism. In coming to the United States, he entered, in the inimitable words of José Martí, "the belly of the beast." Obsequious stooges and political racketeers had been installed in Manila with all the constitutional pomp that the best of bourgeois politicking could offer.

Before he was incapacitated by two cardiac attacks in August 1998, Renato's thoughts were reaching out to broader horizons. If colonialism was not to be transformed into its vulgar carbon copy, neocolonialism, what strategies should be blueprinted to steer the ship of the liberation struggle onto a course that at once combined authentic democracy with profound socialist content? This issue has not lost its burning relevance over the decades and will indubitably be carried into the next millennium.

The corporate media, the academic pimps that have fed at all troughs, and a venal Philippine ruling class have given a deep sigh of relief that this towering colossus is no more. They are whistling in the wind. What they have done is to install mechanisms in their skulls to tell them that their wishful

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thinking is reality. Although Renato Constantino is no longer physically with us, the struggle to put an end to one succession of scum regimes after another continues unabated. In the present and ensuing struggles to rip asunder the present intolerable order of things, the thought, practice, and human dignity of Renato will remain a source of everlasting inspiration.

~

From ZNet's WTO Watch (http://zena.secureforum.com/wto-watch):

Last night, Friday, December 10th, there was a meeting in Olympia, a small city, 60 miles south of Seattle, where local people could share their experiences about their participation at the anti-WTO protests. It was held at the Capitol Theater in downtown Olympia–capacity 750. The theater was totally full and people stayed for three hours to reflect on what had happened. Incredible turnout and energy. I expected maybe 200 people maximum. A movement against corporate domination of the globe is growing by leaps and bounds, at least out here. In solidarity, Peter Bohmer

And from Henry David Thoreau, quoted on the Ruckus Society's Web site (http://www.ruckus.org):

There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part; you can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!

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Letter to Leonard Peltier

by Subcomandante Marcos

In 1975, Leonard Peltier was convicted of the murder of two government agents after a violent confrontation on the Oglala reservation that pitted the American Indian Movement (AIM) and local Sioux against law enforcement officers. Two other AIM members were acquitted in a separate trial, but Peltier received two consecutive life sentences. The trial is the subject of the documentary film *Incident at Oglala* (1975). February 6, 2000, marks Peltier's twenty-fourth year in prison. Information about his case can be found at www.lpsg-co.org, or by contacting the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, PO Box 583, Lawrence, KS 66044, USA. The following letter was first published on the Internet by the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico (NCDM), based in Austin, TX.

Leonard,

Through NCDM and Cecilia Rodriguez we extend greetings from the men, women, children, and elders of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

Cecilia has told us about the grave injustice the North American judicial system has committed against you. We understand that the powerful are punishing your spirit of rebellion and your strong fight for the rights of indigenous people in North America.

Subcomandante Marcos is a member of the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) in Chiapas, Mexico. For information on the EZLN, see www.ezln.org.

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Stupid as it is, the powerful believe that through humiliation, arrogance, and isolation, they can break the dignity of those who give thoughts, feelings, life and guidance to the struggle for recognition and respect for the first inhabitants of the land, over whom the vain United States has risen. The heroic resistance that you have maintained in prison, as well as the broad movement of solidarity that your case and your cause have motivated in the United States and the world, reveal their mistake.

Knowing of your existence and history, no woman or man (if they are honest and conscious) can remain silent before such a great injustice. Nor can they remain still in front of a struggle which, like all that is born and grows from below, is necessary, possible, and true.

The Lakota, a people who have the honor and fortune to have you among their blood, have an ethic that recognizes and respects the place of all people and things, respects the relations that mother earth has with herself and other living things that live and die within her and outside of her. An ethic that recognizes generosity as a measure of human worth, the walk of our ancestors and our dead along the paths of today and tomorrow, women and men as part of the universe that have the power of free will to choose paths and seasons, the search for harmony and the struggle against that which breaks and disorders it. All of this, and more that escapes because we are so far away, has a lot to teach the "western" culture which steers, in North America and in the rest of the world, against humanity and against nature.

Probably the determined resistance of Leonard Peltier is incomprehensible to the powerful in North America, and the world. To never give up, to resist, the powerful call this "foolishness."

But the foolish are in every corner of the world, and in all of them, resistance flourishes in the fertile ground of the most ancient history.

In sum, what the powerful fail to understand is not only Peltier's resistance, but also the entire world, and so they

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intend to mold the planet into the coffin the system represents, with wars, jails, and police officers.

Probably, the powerful in North America think that in jailing and torturing Leonard Peltier, they are jailing and torturing one man.

And so they don't understand how a prisoner can continue to be free, while in prison.

And they don't understand how, being imprisoned, he speaks with so many, and so many listen.

And they don't understand how, in trying to kill him, he has more life.

And they don't understand how one man, alone, is able to resist so much, to represent so much, to be so large.

"Why?" the powerful ask themselves and the answer never reaches their ears: Because Leonard Peltier is a people, the Lakota, and it is impossible to keep a people imprisoned.

Because Leonard Peltier speaks through the Lakota men and women who are, in themselves and in their nature, the best of mother earth.

Because the strength that this man and this people have does not come from modern weapons, rather it comes from their history, their roots, their dead.

Because the Lakota know that no one is more alive than the dead.

Because the Lakota, and many other North American Indian people, know that resisting without surrender not only defends their lives and their liberty, but also their history and the nature that gives them origin, home, and destiny.

Because the great ones always seem so small to those who can not see the history that each one keeps inside.

Because the racism that now governs can only imagine the other and the different in jail or in the trashcan, where two Lakota natives were found last month, murdered, in the community of Pine Ridge. This is justice in North America: those who fight for their people are in jail, those who despise and murder walk unpunished.

What is Leonard Peltier accused of?

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Not of a crime he didn't commit. No. He is accused of being other, of being different, of being proud to be other and different.

But for the powerful, Leonard Peltier's most serious "crime" is that he seeks to rescue in the past, in his culture, in his roots, the history of his people, the Lakota. And for the powerful, this is a crime, because knowing oneself with history impedes one from being tossed around by this absurd machine that is the system.

If Leonard Peltier is guilty, than we are all guilty because we seek out history, and on its shoulders we fight to have a place in the world, a place of dignity and respect, a place for ourselves exactly as we are, which is also very much as we were.

If the Indian people of the North and Indian people of Mexico, as well as the indigenous people of the entire continent, know that we have our own place (being who we are, not pretending to be another skin color, another tongue, another culture), what is left is that other colors that populate the entire world know it. And what is left is for the powerful to know it. So that they know it, and learn the lesson so well that they won't forget, many more paths and bridges are needed that are walked from below.

On these paths and bridges, you, Leonard Peltier, have a special place, the best, next to us who are like you.

Salud, Leonard Peltier, receive a hug from one who admires and respects you, and who hopes that one day you will call him "brother."

Vale, and health to you, and I hope that injustice disappears tomorrow, with yesterday as a weapon and today as a road.

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast,
Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos
Mexico, October 1999

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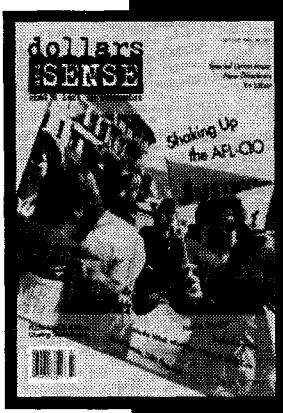

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Because of the heightened sense of struggle (and success) in Seattle, coming home has been very difficult. As this goes to press, one week after the convergence, I am back in New York City, with its frenzied consumers, massive billboards, and vapid holiday fervor. I am profoundly uncomfortable. I don't want to relax or adjust; I want to keep fighting. The spirit that makes revolution possible was strong on the streets of Seattle. I saw courage, strategy, and determination that I am neither willing nor able to forget. People who were gassed or sprayed moved over to the sidewalk to clean their eyes and skin and catch their breath, then went straight back into the street. We fought the WTO with our bodies and our minds, shut down the opening day of meetings, and helped derail the piece of the program that extends the power of global capitalism. A clear and radical goal was articulated and accomplished. I saw solidarity emerge among labor and environmentalists, liberals and radicals, young and old. Multiple approaches flourished: a protestor could march with the AFL-CIO or dress up as a sea turtle, try to block delegates attempting to enter the convention center, dance to hip-hop and techno coming over a sound system hidden inside a van blocking an intersection, lock down in front of a row of riot police, answer phones, dispatch medics, smash windows.

Now the long-term struggle resumes: continuing to spread the word, keeping people awake, angry, alive. One piece of graffiti was painted all over Seattle: "Don't Forget. We are Winning."

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(continued from inside front cover)

learned legal support techniques and jail solidarity tactics, and developed strategies for nonviolent action through role-playing and discussion. For a few days, in Seattle and in cities in solidarity all over the world, people finally mattered more than profit.

At seven in the morning on November 30, I went with several friends to the opening rally at Seattle Central Community College on Capitol Hill. A few people spoke to the crowd; puppets, banners, drums, and a tuba were mustered; and we began marching through the rain toward the convention center, where the ministerial meetings were to be held. My group, which included three legal support people and two lawyers, decided to stay near the blue flags that signified people willing to be arrested. (Green flags were for people who wanted to participate but not end up in jail). A few minutes after we started walking, a group of about fifty people in hooded black sweatshirts, black pants, and black boots broke off from the main march. We joined them, thinking that they were likely to encounter police and might need legal support. We yelled "wake up!" to the apartments above storefronts as we walked, and people hung out their windows to watch or encourage. Police blockades were everywhere. Our route was circuitous and fluid, decided upon by a few people with walkie-talkies at the front of the group. As we neared the convention center, we found about thirty people locked down in front of one of the entrances, facing several squad cars. The anarchists we'd been with scattered, and my group talked to the people stretched across the road, arms joined inside lengths of pipe.

The rest of our day was spent on the move. We ran from blockade to blockade: sometimes as legal support, calling in to the DAN legal office to ask where help was most needed, writing the legal office phone number on the insides of demonstrators' arms in case they landed in jail, gathering information from a man who'd been shot in the face with a rubber bullet (minutes after we'd heard cops tell reporters they weren't shooting); sometimes as impromptu medics, washing out the eyes of teargassed or pepper-sprayed demonstrators; and sometimes as protesters, getting gassed several times ourselves.

I've heard and read incessant commentary about the violence. By Monday, December 6, one newspaper was estimating 2.5 million dollars in property damage and 7 million dollars in lost revenue for downtown stores. Laid-back Seattle residents at first did seem frustrated with the "hubbub" but, as they became aware of the police aggression, quickly began siding with the protesters. But what about violence of the WTO? Windows were smashed and tagged with graffiti at the Gap, Banana Republic, Old Navy, Nike, Starbucks, and Warner Brothers, all of whom are known for their use of sweatshop labor. No one screeching about violence seems bothered by women losing fingers as they sew clothes for the Gap in Saipan. Shouldn't we show our intolerance of murderous corporate greed in the most direct way possible? I saw a man yelling "Use your words!" at a black-hooded teenager kicking in a window at Starbucks. Since when does any giant corporation or the WTO really use words? If you don't have money, how do you speak to a multinational corporation? And the police—spraying tear gas, pepper spray, wielding billy clubs, and shooting rubber bullets in defense of the corporate capitalist state—were much more violent than any of the protesters.

(continued on page 64)

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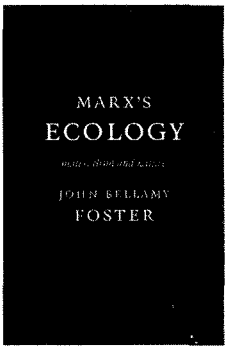

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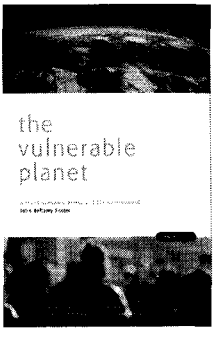

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